

District 25 News

MAKIKI, TANTALUS, MCCULLY, PAPAOLEA

MARCH 2008

The Shortlist

COFFEE TALK

Coffee Talk is an open forum for district residents to talk with Rep. Belatti about what's going on in our neighborhood and at the Legislature. Please come share your concerns and ideas about the issues that are important to you.

The following Coffee Talk events are scheduled for the respective community residents listed:

MONDAY, MARCH 31

Fernhurst YWCA at Oahu,
1st Floor Dining Room @ 6:00pm

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

Punahou Circle Apartments,
Outside of the Resident Manager's Office
@ 6:00pm

MONDAY, APRIL 7

Arcadia Retirement Residence,
The Chapel @ 10:00am

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

Open to all District 25 residents,
Makiki District Park (tentative) @ TBD

MAKIKI BUS BRIGADE

Saturday, April 12
8:00am-12 noon

Rep. Belatti invites you to join her and other district residents for a cleanup of neighborhood bus stops. The Bus Brigade will remove/paint over graffiti and collect litter at district bus stops. Please contact cleanup coordinator Francis at 586-9425 or by email at belatti2@capitol.hawaii.gov if you need more information or would like to join the round up.

It's Easy to Be Green!

A PDF file of this issue of "District 25 News" may be downloaded from Rep. Belatti's House Democratic Caucus webpage at http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hsemaj/belatti_della.html, or you can request regular delivery of the newsletter to your email box at fo@capitol.hawaii.gov.



Dear Friends & Neighbors,

With the U.S. economy in a recession and a State economy that is experiencing slow-downs in the visitor and construction industries, we are entering into a period of challenging economic times.

In the context of this gloomy forecast, the House recently passed its draft of the State Budget that imposes 4% reductions to most departments' general fund discretionary budgets. The House's proposed budget also removed many positions from State government that have been vacant since June 30, 2007, or longer.

Despite these restrictions, the House's proposed budget still provides for and focuses on critical State needs. These needs include ensuring that affordable housing projects continue to be built, funding programs that respond to critical health and human service needs, and supporting the ongoing repair and maintenance of physical infrastructure, including our schools and harbors.

In the time we have left before the Legislature adjourns, there are still opportunities to address the pressing issues in our community. As always, I welcome and encourage you to share your thoughts with me. Please contact me by phone at 586-9425, by fax at 586-9431, or by email at repbelatti@capitol.hawaii.gov.

With warmest aloha,

Della Au Belatti
State Representative, District 25

Taxation

Ensuring Access to This Year's Tax Rebates

By WAYNE M. TANNA

District resident and Chaminade University professor Wayne M. Tanna explains how residents may qualify and apply for state and federal tax credits that can help household budgets in these tough economic times.

Community Survey

From Your Neighbor: 2008 Community Survey	
Your comments will help guide Rep. Belatti as issues are considered during the 2008 legislative session. Comments are optional, but we will send responses only to those who provide their mailing address.	
EDUCATION Many states are establishing publicly funded pre-school programs so that all 4-year-olds can participate. How important is it for Hawaii to do the same? <input type="checkbox"/> Very important <input type="checkbox"/> Important	Do you believe that all new or built "green" by using photovoltaic energy consumption or using "friendly" technology to cool by? <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly favor

Where Do You Stand On the Issues?

Voice your thoughts on the issues that are important to our district and our state in *District 25 News*' legislative survey.

Honoring Maryknoll School on its 80th Anniversary

By KERIANNE PASCUA

On February 11, 2008, Representative Belatti and the Hawaii House of Representatives formally recognized Maryknoll School for its outstanding work and service to the State of Hawaii. This House Floor Presentation commemorated Maryknoll School's 80 years of service to Hawaii.

Sophomore class president, Mary Coghlin started the festivities with her beautiful acappella version of Ave Maria. Following her invocation the State Representatives passed House Resolution 61, which recognized and celebrated Maryknoll School for its outstanding work and service to the state of Hawaii. Rep. Belatti presented Maryknoll School honorees with a congratulatory certificate. Joining the celebration, seated in the gallery, were 50 students from the high school and grade school, Maryknoll Sisters, faculty and staff, Maryknoll School board members and alumni.

By educating our youth, encouraging spiritual growth and the building of character, and instilling the charitable philosophy of the Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll School has suc-



Maryknoll honorees Mr. Michael Baker, President; Sr. Rosario Daly, M. M.; Ms. Betsey Gunderson, High School Principal; Joni Shimomura, High School Student Senate President; and Matthew Kimura, Grade School Representative stand on the floor of the House Chamber as they are recognized by the House of Representatives.

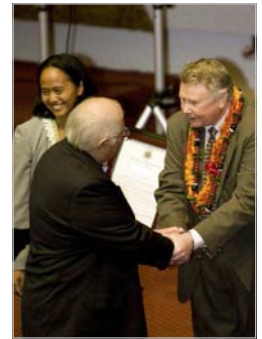


"...this body hereby recognizes and congratulates MARYKNOLL SCHOOL for its exceptional work, achievements and community service to the people of Hawaii, and extends its warmest aloha and best regards for continued success in educating Hawaii's youth."

ceeded in exemplifying the school's motto, "Noblesse Oblige" (To whom much is given, much is expected).

Today, 80 years later, Maryknoll School educates 1,400 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 on two campuses. A total of 830 grade school students receive an exceptional academic foundation at Maryknoll's Wilder campus, and 560 young men and women on the high school campus receive a unique, student-centered experience, that encourages hands-on learning.

Following the floor presentation by Rep. Belatti, the Representatives each took their turn at congratulating the Maryknoll honorees. Speaker Emeritus, Rep. Joseph Souki congratulates President Baker.



Kerianne Pascua, class of 2002, remembers her time as a student at Maryknoll High School clearly. "At Maryknoll, I learned what it meant to give back to the community. My junior year service trip to Majuro was an eye opener. There was no real healthcare for the people at Majuro, and I think it was there where I realized that I wanted to help people as a nurse."

Hawaii to Showcase Wave Energy for the World

By DELLA AU BELATTI

With oil fetching over \$100 per barrel on the global markets and consumer gas prices projected to reach record highs, the pressure to become less oil-dependent and more energy self-sufficient is driving much of the discussion and policy making at the Legislature. By diversifying our sources of energy, Hawaii can move towards reducing our reliance on imported oil and improving our energy self-sufficiency.

In 2001, the Legislature laid the groundwork by enacting Renewable Portfolio Standards that require local electric utility companies to generate 20% of their electricity from renewable resources by 2020. Today, we are one step closer to reach-

ing this goal with the announcement of Oceanlinx Hawaii LLC to develop and operate the nation's first wave energy conversion facility off the island of Maui. Furthermore, the House of Representatives recently passed **House Bill 2401, House Draft 2** that seeks to assist Oceanlinx's efforts to successfully establish this commercial wave-energy project in Hawaii.

Oceanlinx is an established, international company based in Australia with projects in Australia, the United Kingdom, Namibia, Rhode Island and Hawaii. Oceanlinx's proposed wave energy facility will be located about 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile offshore of Maui's Pauwela Point.

This facility will consist of: (1) two or three wave energy units that float on the ocean and generate electric energy from the motion of ocean waves; (2) a sub-sea cable that transports the electricity; and (3) a land-based substation that connects the energy to Maui's grid to help meet Maui's electric energy demand.

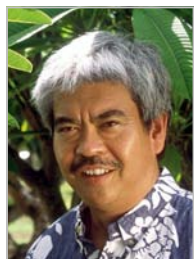
Oceanlinx's wave energy facility has the capacity to generate about 2.7 megawatts of electricity with the potential to power more than 4000 homes and save 9000 tonnes of CO2 atmospheric output per year in comparison to coal-generated power plants. This wave-generated electricity will complement other renewable resources already being used on Maui that include wind

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Help Available to Ensure Access to Rebates

By WAYNE M. TANNA

Much is being said about the government's \$152 billion economic stimulus package. The majority of the reactions focus on the hoped-for economic impacts resulting from the stimulus payments and are coming from the businesses where the rebates will hopefully be spent. Many business owners are hoping to see a lot of purchases that will provide a boost to the economy. Some even have gone so far as to say that the rebates will enrich people's lives.



District 25 resident Wayne M. Tanna is a professor of accounting at Chaminade University and a volunteer instructor and community partner at the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

So what about people who could really benefit from the stimulus payment and the state's constitutionally mandated credit — the elderly, the disabled and really low-wage earners? Will they be left out?

Many retired and disabled Hawai'i residents will end up missing out on both the stimulus rebate and the Hawai'i constitutional credit unless they file both federal and state income-tax returns for 2007. As pointed out in Greg Wiles' article, Hawai'i's stimulus portion is roughly \$400 million. There will be no extra work for most taxpayers since the Internal Revenue Service will use 2007 tax returns to determine eligibility and rebate amounts.

But what if you are a senior citizen living on Social Security or a disabled individual surviving on Social Security disability income? Since many of these folks have not needed to file a tax return for several years, the question becomes, "Will this benefit ever reach them?"

The IRS is also worried about this. Acting IRS Commissioner Linda Stiff recently stated, "(W)e are especially concerned about recipients of Social Security and veterans benefits, who may need to take special steps this year to file a tax return in order to obtain a stimulus payment. IRS.gov will help taxpayers get what they need."

But there are problems in relying too heavily on the Internet and the IRS's Web site to help with this group, as they may not be computer literate. And for those who are able to navigate the Internet, how many on a limited fixed-income can afford access to a computer to get this information at IRS.gov?

For kupuna and the disabled, another benefit that may end up being left in the coffers of the government is the state credit for general income tax. The Hawai'i Constitution requires the state to issue a tax refund when the budget surplus has exceeded projections for two years in a row, as is the case this year. This year, to comply with this constitutional mandate a credit is available to low-income residents (less than \$30,000 for single and married people filing separately; less than \$60,000 for married people filing jointly and head of household).

The credit can be as much as \$65 for single individuals, up to \$140 for single parent head of households, and up to \$160 for married couples.

IRS HELP TO COLLECT FEDERAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS PAYMENTS

For those who do qualify, the Internal Revenue Service's Honolulu office will open this Saturday to help residents file a tax return so they may receive the economic stimulus payments that will be distributed under the Federal Stimulus Act of 2008.

- You may be eligible for the minimum payment of \$300 (\$600 for married couples) even if you are not normally required to file a tax return.
- To qualify for the minimum stimulus payment, you must have at least \$3,000 of qualifying income in any combination of income from Social Security retirement, disability or survivors' benefits; disability compensation, disability pension or survivors' benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs; Tier 1 benefits from Railroad Retirement, certain combat pay and earned income from wages, salaries, tips or net earnings from self-employment that are included in taxable income.
- On Saturday, March 29 the Prince Kuhio Federal Building at 300 Ala Moana Boulevard will be open 9:00am to 3:00pm to answer questions about the Federal Stimulus Act and how to file a tax return.

This is all in addition to the refundable tax credit for low-income workers, which has been available for many years. Once again, one needs to file a state tax return to claim and receive the credit, and this year the state tax department was not able to provide free assistance to Hawai'i residents to file their Hawai'i tax returns as it has in the past.

Continued on page 4

Wave Energy *continued from page 2*

energy from UPC's Kaheawa Wind Farm, biomass energy from the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar plantation, and renewable biodiesel produced by Pacific Biodiesel.

To help ensure the success of Oceanlinx and further the development of wave energy for the future benefit of other islands, HB 2401, HD 2 authorizes the issuance of special purpose revenue bonds (SPRBs) up to \$20,000,000 for the purpose of assisting Oceanlinx with the planning, design, and construction of the proposed wave facility. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000. The issuance of state SPRBs will allow Oceanlinx, as the borrower, to pay a lower interest rate than interest rates on non-exempt taxable borrowings. Ultimately, the repayment of these SPRBs is not an obligation of the State and are, instead, payable solely from the revenues pledged from the proposed project.

Oceanlinx is in the process of obtaining the necessary permits, which includes the completion of an environmental assessment, and assembling the necessary financing in order to develop the facility and begin operations by late 2009.

Hawaii's unique geographic location provides the State and its energy producers an excellent opportunity to harness and generate energy from our abundant natural resources. Renewable wave energy like that proposed by Oceanlinx is environmentally friendly, helps further the State's goal of using more renewable resources to meet our everyday demands, reduces Hawaii's dependency on imported fossil fuels, and increases Hawaii's energy self-sufficiency. With these innovative developments, Hawaii establishes itself as a leader in renewable energy and serves as a showcase for wave energy conversion projects around the world.

Access to Rebates *continued from page 3*

A single disabled resident receiving Social Security disability can get as much as \$400 from the federal and state credits (federal stimulus payment \$300, \$65 Hawai'i general tax credit, plus \$35 Hawai'i low-income refundable credit).

A married couple with both spouses receiving only Social Security could get up to \$830 (\$600 federal stimulus, plus \$160 Hawai'i general tax credit, plus \$70 Hawai'i low-income refundable credit).

The money is there for the asking — but what if you don't know how to ask?

Help is available from many community-based organizations. Trained volunteers participating in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs have been helping for many years, and are once again providing countless hours of service to the community by doing taxes for free. Combined, the VITA and TCE volunteer programs are the third leading filers of income taxes nationally.

Many of the activities of both VITA and TCE are being coordinated by Aloha United Way's Family and Individual Sufficiency Program. A UW's efforts are making it very easy to find a free tax-assistance site in your neighborhood. All you have to do to find a location to get help is to call 211, A UW's statewide information referral line. Then go to the site where an IRS certified volunteer will provide free assistance filing your taxes, and sometime around May the IRS will direct deposit the stimulus payment to your bank account or under certain conditions mail you a check. Then what you do with the stimulus payment after you get it will be up to you.

This commentary was written for The Honolulu Advertiser, and published on Friday, February 29, 2008, and is reprinted with express permission by The Honolulu Advertiser.

Makiki District Park: Hui O Makiki and Community Residents Take the Day to Reverse the Effects of Vandalism



March 1, 2008—Neighborhood action group Hui O Makiki, community volunteers, members of the Makiki Neighborhood Board, the City Department of Parks & Recreation, and the City Transit Services partnered to remove unsightly graffiti from Makiki Park's tennis court walls, library building, and surrounding bus stops. Thanks to the more than 20 volunteers who spent their Saturday morning to beautify Makiki Park for all residents!

From Your Neighbor: 2008 Community Survey

Your comments will help guide Rep. Belatti as issues are considered during the 2008 legislative session. Your name and address are optional, but we will send responses only to those who provide their mailing information.

EDUCATION

Many states are establishing publicly funded pre-school programs so that all 4-year-olds can participate. How important is it for Hawaii to do the same?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Not very important
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ No opinion

Much press has been given to the condition of UH facilities in recent weeks. Do you support additional funding for the University of Hawaii facilities?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Some high schools in Hawaii are creating smaller learning communities that focus on various fields such as construction, science, engineering and math. Do you support making geographical exceptions easier so students can have choices on where to go?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

With the cost of college quickly climbing, saving for college has become an increasingly important concern for parents. Would you support a tax incentive or deduction program for parents that participate in a college savings program, like HI-529?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

ENVIRONMENT

With cost of gasoline ever escalating and concerns of global warming and energy security, do you support higher vehicle taxes for cars that have low miles-per-gallon/high fuel consumption?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Do you believe that all new state building should be built "green" by using photovoltaic cell to reduce energy consumption or using of "environmentally friendly" technology to cool buildings?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

The use of electronic devices is essential to our daily lives and rapidly increasing technology renders our "older" devices obsolete in barely a year or two. Do you support legislation that would create a recycling program for electronic waste disposal?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Since its start, the HI 5¢ Bottle Redemption Program has been quite a success. Do you support providing excess funds generated by the program to county governments to facilitate the recycling programs in the respective counties?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

HOUSING

The lack of affordable housing and rental units continues to be a major problem in Hawaii. Do you support the following measures that would alleviate the problem?

Require affordable housing as a part of all new developments.

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Utilize state funds to build affordable housing.

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Pass anti-real estate speculation laws.

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Pass measures for stricter regulation of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) establishments.

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor

- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

OTHER ISSUES

On January 18, 2008, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) and Governor Linda Lingle announced a \$200 million settlement agreement to resolve payment of ceded land revenues still in dispute. Do you support the suggested settlement and believe that the Legislature should approve the settlement?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

Voters in the upcoming election will decide whether or not we convene a Constitutional Convention to propose amendments to the State Constitution. *Proponents* argue that it has been 30 years since the last one and it is important to comprehensively review our Constitution. *Opponents* argue that there isn't anything dramatic we need to change and that the cost of over \$10 million could be better spent on other needs. Do you support the convening of a Constitutional Convention?

- ☐ Strongly favor
- ☐ Somewhat favor
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ No opinion

REPLY INFORMATION

Name

Address

Phone

Email

- ☐ Please save a tree, send me *District 25 News* by email.

COMMENTS

Please feel free to comment on any of the survey questions or other concerns.

Send your completed survey to:

Representative Della Au Belatti
State Capitol, Room 331
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813